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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, G/IWI
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SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN OF COURAGE AWARD -- NOMINATION
OF SUCIWATI MUNIR

REF: STATE 126072

11. (U) This message is Sensitive but Unclassified -- Please handle accordingly.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: Mission is pleased to nominate Suciwati Munir for the Secretary's 2008 Award for International Women of Courage. A courageous advocate for women's and labor rights--and the widow of prominent human rights activist Munir Thalib--Suciwati has elevated her husband's murder case into a national campaign to transform Indonesia's judicial system into one that fully respects the rule of law and the principle of accountability.

13. (SBU) SUMMARY (Con'd): The presentation of the International Women of Courage Award to Suciwati would place the spotlight on her exceptional efforts. In the process, it would underscore strong USG support for Indonesia's dramatic, transformative move away from autocracy toward democracy and respect for human rights, and uphold--as President Bush has stated--the "non-negotiable demand for human dignity" regionally and internationally. The Ambassador fully supports this nomination. Political Officer Aryani Manring is Mission's point of contact. END SUMMARY.

NOMINATION OF SUCIWATI MUNIR

14. (SBU) The formal nomination of Suciwati Munir follows:

Mission is pleased to nominate Suciwati Munir for the Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage.

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Suciwati (who--like many Indonesians--usually goes by one name), a well-known labor and human rights activist in her own right, is the widow of Munir Thalib, one of Indonesia's leading human rights activists who was poisoned to death in 12004. Suciwati, 39, was born in Malang, East Java, and was already an experienced labor activist--a difficult profession in Indonesia where labor union penetration is very low--when she married Munir, at the time a rising, young human rights lawyer. As she worked on labor and women's rights issues, she was Munir's strongest supporter in his battle for human rights. Soon after her husband's death, Suciwati pressed--against great odds and initially with few allies--for an investigative team which produced evidence alleging that senior Indonesian officials might have orchestrated the killing.

Since that time, Suciwati has conducted a relentless campaign to lobby Indonesian authorities to find and convict the

perpetrators. For Suciwati, this fight goes far beyond seeking justice for her dead husband: it is about confronting and defeating an endemic judicial culture of impunity; it is about upholding the principle that every citizen is accountable under the law, regardless of power or position; it is about Indonesia's leaders honoring their promise to respect human rights and uphold democratic rights for all.

In her long and often lonely battle for justice, Suciwati has lobbied domestically, regionally and internationally, engaged civil society, written articles and editorials, appeared on television, staged protests and rallies, and conducted letter-writing campaigns. In addition, Suciwati founded and leads the Solidarity Network of the Families of Victims of Violence, an organization--with regional Southeast Asian links--dedicated to families of victims whose cases have yet to be solved or investigated by the authorities. In all her activities, she has repeatedly emphasized her messages about justice and transparency. In waging this campaign, Suciwati put herself and her two young children at great risk. She and her family have received numerous death threats warning her to relinquish her quest, all of which she has ignored, saying "we have chosen to live as human rights activists. If you fear, it should always be for other people, not yourself."

In 2005, Suciwati's efforts led the Indonesian government to form an official fact-finding team to re-examine the Munir case. Shortly thereafter, authorities arrested and charged Pollycarpus Priyanto, an off-duty Garuda Airlines employee, with killing Munir under orders from Indonesian intelligence.

In 2006, Suciwati--and the campaign for human rights in Indonesia, more generally--faced a terrible setback when an Indonesian court acquitted Pollycarpus of all charges. Rather than yield, Suciwati reinvigorated her campaign and traveled to the U.S. to meet Executive and Legislative Branch

JAKARTA 00002912 002 OF 002

leaders, as well as to other countries, placing an international and regional spotlight on Indonesia's flawed effort to find and convict Munir's killers. Her U.S. trip included a briefing to the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and meetings with the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions. As a result, President Yudhoyono instructed the police and Attorney General's Office to re-open the Munir murder investigation. In 2007 hearings, stunning revelations appeared potentially implicating former and current Indonesian government officials. At this time, the Supreme Court is also reconsidering Pollycarpus' conviction.

Indonesian and regional human rights activists admire Suciwati for her enormous fortitude in the face of tragedy. They reserve their highest praise for Suciwati's success in turning her husband's case into a litmus test of Indonesia's ability, under President Yudhoyono, to face its past human rights record and establish a credible, accountable judicial system. Human rights activists say that Suciwati could have focused her effort solely on the Munir case; no one would have faulted her for that. Rather, she turned this case into something much bigger: a crusade to transform Indonesia itself. Moreover, Suciwati has demonstrated to Indonesians the power of one woman to effect change and challenge the government. As a result, we believe Suciwati richly deserves the Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage. This award would send the strongest possible message of United States support for human rights and rule-of-law in this Muslim-majority country of over 240 million people.

KEY FACTS

15. (SBU) Key facts about Suciwati Munir follow (due to death threats against Suciwati, please keep this information close-hold):

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MISSION POINT OF CONTACT

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